



COLLEGE EDUCATION: THE WINDS OF CHANGE ARE BLOWING-THE FUTURE IS NOW

Dr. Cory Ross¹, Jonas Ross²

¹Provost, George Brown College, Toronto, Canada.

²PG Dip, MBA (Cand). Education Futurist, Toronto, Canada.

KEY WORDS

Higher Education, Strategy, Delivery Mode, Lifelong Learning.

INTRODUCTION:

"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."

— Aristotle

a) The Future Is Here:

We are living in an era of rapid and fundamental change that affects every sector in countless ways. Globalization is changing culture, politics and economics almost before our eyes, leading to faster growth and broader outlooks, but also to climate change and growing inequities. Advancements in technology are improving productivity and opening new avenues for exploration, but they are accompanied by ethical and privacy concerns, as well as fears about the rise of artificial intelligence and the role of digitization. All of this is driving social change as well: shifts in our social behaviours with the rise of social media; increasing awareness of diverse viewpoints; challenges to mental health and well-being; and new models and patterns for work.

The workforce of the future will need different types of skills to thrive in this world of constant change. Along with job-specific skills, workers will need to develop and cultivate qualities such as innovation literacy and adaptability, digital literacy, cross-discipline interaction and communication, self-awareness, social and emotional intelligence, awareness of diversity, and leadership. Rather than preparing for a single, stable career in a particular industry, learners will need to be ready to adapt to change within their chosen field, and to undergo one or more career changes over their lifetime.

The rapidly changing nature of work and the impact of the digital economy are shifting the paradigms that have traditionally governed higher education. Most children born in 2022 will enter jobs and careers that have not been imagined. Even more urgent, however, is that all workers — young people graduating from high school today, mid-career professionals working in downtown Toronto, and workers new to Canada need skills to respond to labour market needs that are changing from month to month.

Higher education needs to be adaptable and ready to meet these new realities. For example, technology is gradually replacing the textbook, allowing students to practice skills in the virtual world before they work hands-on in the real world; increasing use of simulators in all programs gives learners access to multidisciplinary approaches and brings them face to face with the possibilities and challenges of innovation. Micro-credentials (certificates for smaller, more focused programs of study), flexible delivery options, student mobility and modular learning are all ways that educational institutions can embed the qualities of adaptability and innovation into program design and learning.

The amount and pace of change in the coming years has many implications for colleges and universities, not only for what students need learn, but also for how they learn, and the way learning is structured. At George Brown College, our 2022–2026 strategy will focus on retooling for the future. During the next few years, we will want to lay a solid foundation in order to achieve our Vision 2030 goals.

b) Retooling for the Future:

"Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten."

— (B.F. Skinner)

George Brown College has always been uniquely positioned at the forefront of change: our location in the heart of Toronto allows us to connect with a wide range of employers; our position in Canada's largest city means that our community of learners has had a broad focus and a diverse makeup; our focus

on preparing students for the workforce means that we already have strong relationships with industry; and we have built intricate connections with other colleges and universities - in Ontario and around the world.

We will be developing an academic plan that lays the groundwork for a major pedagogical shift, as we work to ensure that faculty and students have the tools, skills and knowledge they need to meet the challenges and changes that are already shaping the workforce and the world we live in. This plan will build on and considers a number of previous college academic plans and strategic mandate agreements with government. It is our intent to build on our strengths as we look forward — to use our rich history as a launch pad into an exciting future.

For Students:

As the pace of change accelerates, it becomes more and more challenging to predict the specific skills and knowledge students will need as they enter the workforce. Instead, people who thrive in the 21st century will do so with a combination of literacies, competencies and character qualities that they can use in any environment, so that they can adjust and adapt as jobs and working environments evolve. Our focus needs to be on helping students acquire these flexible, transferable skills in the context of job-related programs.

For Teaching:

Learning and teaching also needs to complete a transition in this era of change, as old hierarchical models fall away and new models of mentorship, facilitation and lifelong learning take their place. Teachers will need to be flexible in their teaching style and delivery, and open to learning from their students. They will need to foster students' creativity and critical thinking skills, promote teamwork, and exploit technology to support learning wherever possible. They will also need to embrace digital disruption and opportunities for collaboration as they develop their own skills and areas of interest.

For Higher Education:

For teaching and learning to evolve, college infrastructure will need to change to support it. Higher education is entering a new phase of fluid time frames, modular delivery, competency-based learning, micro-credentialing, and personalized learning. Focusing on the principles of adult learning, we need to teach through the disciplines, encourage transfer of learning, and make learning relevant to the "big picture" of a student's future working life. We will need to support faculty members by renewing its concentration on faculty competency, well-being and professional development. By focusing on new ways of learning and teaching, we will be better placed to prepare students for a world in which they will need to design and drive their own learning and we can become a place that students will return to when they need to acquire new skills or credentials over their lifetime.

So change will be difficult and complex. The imperative to change is not enough, must be made deliberately, effectively and decisively. (Goldstein, Otte 2016).

Clay Christensen (2016), succinctly outlined the dilemma that faces higher education today. He said millions of people, in the U.S. and worldwide, cannot take advantage of traditional higher colleges and universities for any number of reasons having to do with convenience and accessibility, simplicity, and cost. But they would be glad to consume education if it were delivered in a way that fit their life realities. Convenience, accessibility, simplicity, and affordability are the classic benefits that disruptions extend when they emerge, and as a result—no surprise—disruptive higher education upstarts powered by online learning are jumping into the fray.

Key Tenets Shaping the Future of Education:

- **Diverse Time and Place:** Students will have more opportunities to learn at

different times and in different places.

- **Personalized Learning:** Students will learn with study tools that adapt to the capabilities and preferences of individual students.
- **Embrace Access:** Universal design for learning is embedded in all curricula.
- **Free Choice/laddering:** Students will have the freedom to design their own learning path. There will be a number of pathways such that you may enter into a program and seamlessly graduate from another.
- **Project Based Work:** Curriculum will be taught in smaller modules.
- **Field Experience:** Students will learn by doing.
- **Data Interpretation:** Students will think digitally.
- **Retention Vs Comprehension Evaluation:** Students will be tested based on their ability to perform.
- **Student Ownership:** Students will influence pedagogy. (Chorney Rubin 2018).
- **Mentoring will Become More Important:** Education will be guided rather than taught.
- **A New Classroom:** Classrooms will be flexible.
- **Teaching Ethics and Empathy:** Students will need to be taught interpersonal and cognitive skills.
- **Flexible Delivery Infrastructure:** Reorganize systems to permit flexible curriculum delivery to allow for mastery based learning without time constraints and continually running month long semesters.
- **Task-based Learning and Testing:** Embed a simulation-based activities (digital or real world) in all programs to augment field education.
- **Innovation Education:** Integrate a venture-type microcredential into all programs to encourage entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship.
- **Disruption Proof Talent Management Model:** Partner with industry to develop a recruitment/training model that future proofs faculty by providing professional development in industry disruption adaptation and innovation.
- **Customise Curriculum to Student Segments:** Design curriculum delivery for multiple student typologies: eg. international, hobbyist, Con Ed, returning, executive, etc.
- **Teach How to Teach:** Provide contextualized teaching workshops such as in-house training in technology, pedagogical techniques, and diversity and inclusion.
- **Teaching Simulation Labs:** Build lab that allow teachers to test and learn how to use new technologies before being used in the classrooms.

CONCLUSION:

While the new economy will be driven by automation, machine learning and digital transformations, responsibility will be placed on educational institutions to create graduates who are self aware, self-driven and know how to adaptively learn. To achieve this, the College will focus on harnessing and developing the skill sets within our various communities; integrating industry partner feedback and expertise, focusing on individualistic strategies for student advancement and wellbeing, and creating a faculty that is engaged, current, adaptable and ready to mentor. In short, the foundation of a resilient future for the College will come through the support and creation of resilient people. This will be the focus of the strategic sprint for George Brown College in order to realize Vision 2030.

REFERENCES:

- I. Aristotle. <https://www.azquotes.com/author/524-Aristotle/tag/education>.
- II. Skinner B.F. New Scientist, May 21, Vol 22 (392), 1964 pp.483-4.
- III. Goldstein M, Otte, G. Change we must: deciding the future of higher education, Rosetta books, 2016.
- IV. Christensen C. Harvard business review article, Boston 2016
- V. Chorney-Rubin P. Research Colloquium, Early Childhood Education, GBC Press 2018.